

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 18, 2005

GIAQUINTA BILL ON MOTOR VEHICLE OFFENSES GOES TO GOVERNOR

INDIANAPOLIS -- House Bill 1270, legislation co-authored by State Rep. Ben GiaQuinta (D-Fort Wayne), that creates criminal offenses for unlawfully entering, possessing, or operating a motor vehicle, has been sent to the governor for final approval. The bill also provides for enhanced penalties for this crime.

The punishment for unlawfully entering a vehicle is a Class A misdemeanor if the vehicle has visible steering column damage or ignition switch alteration. The charges are elevated to a Class D felony if the motor vehicle is used in the commission of a crime.

Certain people are excluded from the penalties in this bill. These include public safety officers, state police motor carrier inspectors and employees of collection agencies. Also, if the motor vehicle must be moved because it is abandoned, inoperable or improperly parked, the person who moves that car will not be punishable.

According to GiaQuinta, 120 people who were caught in or driving someone else's car in Fort Wayne last year received only a disciplinary action. Because current state laws are inadequate, these people were not charged with auto theft.

"I am very pleased that this bill has the chance to become law," said GiaQuinta. "Hopefully it will decrease the number of auto thefts and attempted auto thefts in the state."